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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 001093

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S APRIL 23 MEETING WITH DUTCH POLITICAL  
DIRECTOR: IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, EU CHINA ARMS EMBARGO

Classified By: Ambassador Clifford M. Sobel for reasons 1.5 (B and D)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador Sobel met with Dutch MFA Political Director Hugo Siblesz on April 23 to discuss an upcoming Iraqi judicial conference in The Hague, possible Dutch leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, extension of the Dutch troop deployment in Iraq, the U.S.-EU transatlantic dialogue, and the EU's China Arms Embargo. Siblesz expressed support for the proposed Iraqi judicial conference. He outlined Dutch and German discussions concerning PRT cooperation near the German-led PRT in Konduz. He said that the cabinet was likely to decide on an extension of the Dutch Iraq deployment in mid-May. Siblesz expressed concern about the potential downgrading of the Dutch on the U.S. TIP report (reported septel). He said security would be the main focus of the transatlantic dialogue during the Dutch EU Presidency. Concerning opposition to lifting the EU arms embargo on China, he suggested that the U.S. had a stronger argument in focusing on regional stability and Taiwan rather than on human rights concerns. End summary.

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Iraqi Judicial Conference  
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12. (SBU) Amb. Sobel briefed Siblesz on the upcoming CPA-sponsored conference on rule of law for approximately 20 Iraqi judges to take place in The Hague, May 5-7, 2004. The conference will feature participation by Supreme Court Justices Anthony M. Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor as well as UK Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales Lord Wolf. Siblesz echoed FM Bot's enthusiasm for the project who said that such events are "what The Hague is all about." Amb. encouraged Dutch participation and requested GONL support for logistics issues including security. Siblesz said he would raise the matter with the Dutch Justice Ministry that afternoon.

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PRTs  
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13. (S) Amb. Sobel stressed that the U.S. encouraged Dutch involvement with PRTs in Afghanistan. He observed that many countries are interested in working in the north of the country and raised the possibility of the Netherlands deploying in the west. Siblesz said the Dutch military's preference was to go to Baghlan near the German PRT at Konduz, though the GONL had certain problems with German arrangements for command and control. As far as the west was concerned, the logistics were more problematic. He said that the Dutch had spoken with Spanish FM Moratinos and said that cooperation with the Spanish might be another option. That said, the GONL's first priority was to work with the Germans, further to an agreement between PM Balkenende and Chancellor Schroeder during their meeting in The Hague the previous week. Siblesz said the GONL still planned to reach a decision in time for the Istanbul Summit. He said this decision might also include a decision to deploy a small number of Dutch Army special operations forces commandos in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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Iraq troop deployment  
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14. (C) Siblesz said the GONL was looking at mid-May for a cabinet decision to extend the deployment of Dutch troops in Iraq currently due to expire on July 15 (note: the Dutch have 1300 troops in Al Muthanna province as part of the UK Multinational Division. end note). He said the Cabinet would have to make its decision on the basis of assumptions about progress towards another UNSCR and a request from a new Iraqi government. This would be followed by a parliamentary debate. The cabinet decision might have to be linked to a clause calling for additional discussion in June on the basis of its assumptions about a UNSCR and an Iraqi request. Siblesz said the GONL could proceed on the basis of support from a simple majority in parliament, however its preference is for consensus to include the main opposition Labor Party. In this regard, signals from Labor are not very promising. In terms of duration, Siblesz said the GONL was planning for an eight month extension. This would accommodate two Dutch

troop rotations (which last four months) and would get past the planned elections in January 2005.

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U.S.-EU Transatlantic Agenda  
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15. (C) Amb. Sobel noted the April 26-27 visit of EUR/PDAS Ries presented an excellent opportunity to look at possibilities for the U.S.-EU transatlantic agenda during the Dutch EU Presidency starting July 1. Siblesz said the Dutch priorities would be "security, security, security." Amb. Sobel said we were exploring the possibilities for meetings between Sec. Ridge and Attorney General Ashcroft and their Dutch counterparts during the Dutch presidency. Siblesz said the EU's "basket" structure for addressing these issues might not reflect the reality of what we are trying to accomplish. Turning to terrorist-financing, Siblesz said that he supported qualified majority voting on Clearing House issues.

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EU China Arms Embargo  
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16. (C) The Ambassador argued against lifting the EU China Arms Embargo. Siblesz said it appeared the Irish had passed this issue to the Dutch Presidency, and that he would be happy to pass it in turn to Luxembourg. The problem is the EU-China Summit is due to take place during the Dutch Presidency. He said that PRC officials raised the matter repeatedly during PM Balkenende's recent trip to China. Siblesz said that he did not think U.S. arguments against lifting the embargo on human rights grounds were convincing. A better argument against lifting was the possible effects on regional stability and Taiwan. He contended that no one would argue China's human rights situation was perfect, but it was not in the same league as Zimbabwe or Sudan. He thought the real challenge would be adjusting the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers to address China. His advice would be for the U.S. to focus on addressing military goods within this context. Siblesz said there was reluctance within the EU to address this issue, "everyone is watching everyone." He expected further discussion at the next EU political director's meeting but "no one will speak out against dropping it because it will get back to the Chinese." The Ambassador pushed back again, stressing the importance of maintaining the embargo.  
SOBEL